HOW A NEW PLAY IS REHEARSED

—No Task in the World Is Really Much Harder Than That of Preparing for a Professional Performance.

Grace George, William A. Brady and Frances Aymar Mathews discuss a point in Miss Mathews's play "Pretty Peggy."

SCENE ON A "GRAND STAIRWAY" WITH A LADDER UNDERSTUDYING THE STAIRWAY.

If you have ever been a member of an amateur theatrical company doubtless you recall the sport of rehearsing a new play to be produced.

A jolly gathering at the home of some friend, a large amount of chaffing and a light lunch probably constituted the occupation of the afternoon, and you came away amazed that professional actors should really draw a salary for that sort of thing.

You will be surprised to hear that no task in the world really is much harder than the task of preparing for a professional performance, and that both stage directors and directed dread rehearsals above any other feature of their work.

The labor of putting on such a piece as "Pretty Peggy," in which Grace George is to be seen here, is one requiring at least two weeks of constant attention.

The larger the number of persons employed and the greater the amount of business to be taught the longer the time given to preliminary performances. Thus, it is more difficult to stage a comic opera than a romantic drama, and more difficult to stage a romantic drama than a farce comedy.

A capable director, such as Max Freeman or Frank Hatch, gets as much as $300 a week for his services, but the actors are not paid anything until after the first public rendering of plays. In cases in which the manager of a production is a man of practical experience he often directs rehearsals himself.

William A. Brady has an assistant for those portions of the work which are of comparatively small importance, but takes personal charge of the big scenes.

His specialty is the handling of crowds of people and he was responsible for the great Board of Trade panic in his recent production of "The Pit" and for the famous riot in "Pretty Peggy."

At the beginning of a theatrical season there frequently are as many as 200 companies rehearsing in New York.

The more fortunate of these work on the stages of unused theaters, but many are consigned to halls and ballrooms for which an enormous rental is charged at this time of the year.

Since productions are being made constantly, rehearsals go on constantly, but the majority of the annual crop of plays are prepared for presentation between August and October.

After a play has been accepted by a manager the parts are copied, so that each actor has his speeches on a separate manuscript. In the old days the company was first convened to hear the play read, usually by the author, but this practice has become generally obsolete and nowadays the performer, unless he be one of the favored few, who is permitted to take the piece home over night, gets his idea of what it is all about at a rehearsal.

The first of these means little work; scarcely more than the handing out of parts and an informal introduction of the members of the organization to one another. "To-morrow at 10," says the stage manager, and the players know that the serious work is about to begin.

"To-morrow at 10," they arrive, fresh looking and in good spirits, jesting as they receive their mail from the stage doorkeeper. Inside the theater their spirits are dampened. The only light in the house is afforded by a single cluster of electric bulbs, under which is placed the table bearing the manuscript and a chair for the director.

The auditorium looks like a huge black cave, from which the white-cloaked seats rear themselves like ghosts of the pleasure-seekers who occupied them a few hours ago. It is unbearably hot.

A force of carpenters, blissfully indifferent to what is going on about them, hammer and saw with distracting noise. The performers wait about for the stage manager to finish a long argument with the author or the manager. There is no place to sit, and they are as tired as the stage manager is angry when the rehearsal begins.

At last it does begin.

"First act," cries the stage manager.

Those persons who are on the stage at the rise of the curtain step into their places. The scene begins. There is no setting; nothing but the bare walls of the theater and the force of carpenters.

The players are told that they are supposed to be in a public street in Paris or in the greenroom of Covent Garden Theater, but credulity is stretched in realizing this.

It is impossible to work up any enthusiasm because everybody is reading his or her part, and reading it with the slowness and badness born of unfamiliarity.

Nevertheless, the stage manager is sufficiently heartless to express energetic dissatisfaction with the rehearsal. "Go over it again," he says. They do go over it again—and again, and yet again. Each time the stage manager devises some new business. He is responsible for as much of the action of the piece as the author is of the dialogue, and frequently he alters even speeches to make them suit "the action to the work."

At the fifth repetition the author, the star, the manager and the stage manager become involved in a discussion as to whether the scene is worth while anyway. Pending the settlement of the question the tired company stands about in various attitudes of weariness. Finally it is concluded to change the situation, the author makes a note of what is required and the next scene is taken up.

During this next scene the star may be supposed to stand on a balcony or a staircase.

There being no balcony or staircase, she is perched on a shaky stepladder, where she occupies a most uncomfortable position for half an hour or more.

At the end of this time an important dramatic episode comes up. The impresario takes charge, his coat off, his hat jammed over his eyes. Not thrice only does he go over the scene, but a dozen times, the twelfth time finding the actors crouching on the floor in utter weariness.

He is an exceptional stage manager who is not sufficiently tired by now to be in an exceedingly nasty humor, in which case his sarcasm helps no little in making things unpleasant.

At 2 o'clock there is a fifteen-minute intermission for lunch, and then the rehearsal is continued until 6 or 7 o'clock. The company departs to spend the night studying lines, having been instructed to be "letter perfect in the first act to-morrow," and to arrange such details as costumes and make-up.

Three weeks of this sort of thing brings the average company to a final dress rehearsal—the heart-breaking affair at which every one seems incompetent, the play impossible, the scenery possessed of a thousand devils and the work of almost a month to have resulted in nothing.

A hundred dress rehearsals equals one fit of lunacy. The players are hauled over the coals without mercy and depart to astonish themselves the night following, when keyed up to the highest pitch, by giving a perfect performance.

It is not an unusual thing for a dress rehearsal to last sixteen hours at a stretch.

GREAT SARDINE CATCHES ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST.

Fortunes Come to California Fishermen as the French Source Fails.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

San Francisco, Feb. 13.—From the coasts of France comes a wail that the sardine fisheries have failed, and from the shores of California stories of an unprecedented catch. The channel between Catalina and San Pedro is fairly swarming with sardines. If the water were only oil they would be ready for immediate exportation, so closely are they packed by the hand of nature.

The water is fairly black with them in huge splotches that can be plainly seen by passing vessels. And passing vessels do their best to avoid these splotches, as they have not found that sardine chowder agreed with their inner mechanism. So that only the boats engaged in the fishing get in among the fish, and they send out into the thick of the fish small boats that have no inner works.

The fish are caught in a great purse net, nearly 1,000 feet in circumference. It is drawn up very much as a man draws his tobacco pouch, but it takes block and tackle to do it. When the mouth of the purse is about forty feet wide the scoops are brought into play. Then the work is fast and furious. The scoops hold about a bushel, and they dip down into the net and dump their wriggling load into box-like sections, about 12 feet square and perhaps 13 inches deep, into which the deck of the fishing vessels is divided.

Two men work the scoop, while the rest of the crew spreads the shining gold and silver shower of fish out into even layers and covers them with salt.

All fishermen say that they have never seen anything like this year's run of fish. The vessels come in packed to their utmost capacity, the fish squirming and flopping over the sides, the men standing knee-deep in fish.

Sometimes seals are caught in the purse net. Seals and sea gulls are regarded as the best friend of the fishermen, for they show where the fish are. In some places the yellow tails also prey on the sardines.

At these places, for an acre or more around, there is seen a great foam. It rises upon the surface like the furious chop-chopping of the channel waves. It can be seen for miles, and is a sure sign of sardines trying to escape their enemy. In such places yellow tails, too, are caught.

Over two tons were taken in one place near Catalina recently. Old fishermen say that the fish are all out of season. There seems to be some disturbing influence, possibly a lack of food, in the places where they are accustomed to feed, driving them into the Pacific coast waters.

But it is certain that there has never before been such a rush of sardines to the California waters, so that on the whole the Bohemian, who loves his midnight lunch, the bachelor maid and the boarding-school girl, who like to picnic at impossible hours, can probably get their supply of sardines as usual, and at about the usual prices, unless they insist on the imported variety—in which case, as they will probably have been imported to France and then imported back to America, the price will be high because, "the sardine fisheries have failed this year, you know."

APOPLEXY'S VICTIM BURNED.

Aged Man, Holding Lamp, Is Smothered in Flames.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

Philadelphia, Feb. 13.—Stricken by apoplexy and so powerless to extinguish a fire which he had started by dropping a lamp, aged George Burir was smothered to death in the flames which damaged his home at No. 2233 Ritter street.

His body was found by firemen, lying partly under his bed, and, frantic with fear in an adjoining room, was his wife, whom the firemen carried to a place of safety. The loss on the house and its contents is $300.

The dead man, who was known to all in the neighborhood as "Uncle Buck," had once been a dyer, but retired three years ago, at which time he married, his wife being eight years his junior. She was a widow and he a widower.

The wife knew nothing of the fire, although the flames were spreading rapidly to all parts of the little home, until Emil Englemann and William McCarthy saw the flames, and forced an entrance through a window. Followed by the firemen, they groped through the smoke-filled halls and discovered the aged wife.

TO SAVE "DOROTHY Q" HOUSE.

Appeal Made for Funds to Preserve Historic Mansion.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

Boston, Feb. 13.—An appeal has been issued for the preservation of the Edmund Quincy house, commonly known as the "Dorothy Q. House," at Quincy, Mass.

This famous dwelling, so closely identified with the early history of the country, may soon be torn down. This house, a portion of it being built in 1636, has for more than two centuries seen within its walls some of the most famous men and women of Massachusetts.

Here was born "Dorothy Q." of Doctor Holmes's poem, here John Hancock came courting beautiful Dorothy Quincy, and on the walls of the north parlor still remains the quaint wall paper, imported from Paris in anticipation of their wedding. Here came John Adams and later John Quincy Adams, Benjamin Franklin and many of the revolutionary patriots to partake of its hospitality.

The house is most picturesquely situated, standing upon the high road, and easily accessible to visitors. Singularly enough, it happens that three successive owners of the mansion have preserved it without alteration, and it remains to-day exactly as it was in pre-revolutionary days.

By the north side of the house runs the brook, alluded to by Judge Sewall in his diary, March, 1711, when, after a journey "to Braintree," he turned in "to Cousin Quinsey and lodged in the chamber next the brooke."

Later another chamber, still nearer the brook, was provided for the celebrated tutor, Flynt, in the L which Colonel Quincy erected for the use of that celebrated man, who was for over half a century a tutor at Harvard College. The study used by him is still shown in the mansion.

The house belongs to Reverend D. M. Wilson, who, having removed to Brooklyn, was obliged a year ago to offer it for sale. The land has been cut up into house lots and must be sold.

The purpose of the appeal is to try to arouse in the hearts of Massachusetts men and women, to whom the history of their country is dear, a sense of their duty to future generations to preserve this historic dwelling.

The amount needed to purchase the property is $9,000. If this can be secured the estate will be held by a Board of Trustees, and the preservation of the house forever assured, as the rental from a portion of it will suffice for its maintenance. Charles Francis Adams has contributed $500 for its purchase, Ellen C. de Q. Woodbury $100, and Josiah H. Quincy $50.

SENTENCED TO WASH FACE.

Judge Told Woman She Reminded Him of Soap Advertisement.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

Omaha, Feb. 13.—A penalty unique in the annuals of the Police Court was imposed on Kitty Williams for vagrancy and neglect to wash her face. The woman was sentenced to the city jail for twenty days and ordered to take a bath every day.

Kitty's appearance as she stood before the bench brought a scowl to the Magistrate's face.

"You remind the court of the advertisement: 'I used your soap ten years ago and have used no other since,' said Judge Berka. "When did you wash your face?"

The woman admitted that it was about three months ago; she had lost track of the exact date.

She didn't like to wash in cold water when the thermometer registered below zero.

"The sentence of the court will be that you be provided with a warm cell for twenty days, a scrub brush and a cake of soap," said the Judge, "and further that the jailer see to it that you take a bath once a day."

FEARED HE'D DIE, AND DID.

Man Succumbed to Heart Disease After Predicting Death.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

Philadelphia, Feb. 13.—Peter Rittenhouse, superintendent of the Fairhill Reservoir at Sixth street and Lehigh avenue, died at his home within an hour after he had told his wife that his end was near.

Rittenhouse was a victim of heart disease. After arising he complained to his wife that he was feeling ill.

"This illness," said Rittenhouse, "will probably be the last I will ever have. I fear the attack will kill me."

Rittenhouse was 68 years and a brother of Lieutenant Rittenhouse of the City Hall Guards. He took charge of the Fairhill Reservoir many years ago.

Cost $12 to Slap Newsboy.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

Wilkesbarre, Pa., Feb. 12.—It cost J. R. Fry $12 costs and a lecture by Alderman Donohue to slap an enterprising newsboy at the Lehigh Valley Station. The newsboy shouted, "Paper, mister," three times at Fry, and Fry, annoyed, slapped him. The youngster hurried to Alderman Donohue and had a warrant issued.

Hunger Made Her Steal.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

New York, Feb. 13.—Georgia Schneider, the young woman who stole a pocketbook containing $15 and a diamond ring worth $60 from another girl because she was fainting with hunger, was discharged in the Jefferson Market Court.